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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides guidelines for informing the public about adult, vocational, and manpower training programs. It is intended primarily for the state or local program administrator with little or no background in public relations. (BH)

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INVOLVING THE PUBLIC IN ADULT, VOCATIONAL, AND MANPOWER PROGRAMS

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Involving the Public in Adult, Vocational, and Manpower Programs

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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FOREWORD

This booklet, prepared by the Information and Reports Staff of the Bureau of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education, is designed to help fill a need for a basic guide on how to keep the public better informed about adult, vocational, and manpower training programs.

If these programs are to be successful, they must have the support of the public, and only a well-informed public can be expected to support them.

One of the principal ways to keep the public informed is through effective public relations activities. Such endeavors communicate to the public what the schools are doing, how school tax money is being spent, and how well schools are carrying out their responsibilities.

The booklet is primarily a guide for those who have little or no background in public relations, particularly State and local administrators who would like to initiate, develop, or improve their public relations activities in support of adult, vocational, or manpower training programs, but who do not have a formal public information operation for such programs.

Arthur Lee Hardwick
Associate Commissioner
Bureau of Adult, Vocational,
and Technical Education

CONDUCTING A PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN

If you find yourself called upon to conduct public relations activities for adult, vocational, or manpower training programs, but have little or no public relations experience, this booklet can help you do an effective job.

The Importance of Public Relations

All government agencies, Federal, State, and local (including school districts), have a duty to keep the public informed of their activities and their programs. The public has a right to know what its money is being spent for and how well it is being used. But beyond the obvious right to know, a citizen has a need to know--because only if he is well informed about the workings of the Government can he effectively carry out his responsibilities.

Public relations in education—in this case adult, vocational, and manpower education programs —means enlisting the cooperation of the public in planning, conducting, and financing instruction.

Public relations is doing the right thing--and getting caught at it. Here are some pointers which should help you get caught:

Public Relations Tools

A must for the public relations effort is an accurate roster of staff members and their titles. Make very sure all names and initials are correct.

A date book is essential. Make a note 3 months before any special event that plans should be made to tell about it.

Also keep a scrapbook of press clippings and of notes about radio or television broadcasts which concern your project. Be sure to mark clippings and notes carefully with date and name of paper or station.

Another must is a basic organization fact sheet which summarizes in one or two pages all important data about the project. A sample organization fact sheet is reproduced on page 2. It can be adapted to fit any project or organization. Keep it constantly up to date. Perhaps a fact sheet will be needed on each of several parts of a project. But be sure to have one fact sheet which covers the overall program.

In updating the fact sheet note the date of revision, usually in the lower lefthand corner. Make sure everyone who has a copy of the old one receives a copy of the revision. It is a good idea to give reporters who cover the operation and their city or news editors copies of the fact sheet and each revision.

State agencies should have copies of fact sheets from all projects in their State, or prepare their own from data already on file in the State office.

Using the Media

Most of the public information effort involves two activities. The first consists of responding to specific requests for information about programs from media representatives. The second is voluntary reporting to fulfill the obligation to inform the public regularly.

One way of providing information effectively to media is to conduct a Communications Day by inviting members of the press, radio, and television to tour the program. Seeing it in action, they can better understand its objectives. Invite a prominent person to visit along with the newsmen. This will promote wider interest in the affair, with greater possibilities of both news and photo coverage.

Keep in mind that youths learning a trade and adults learning how to do their work better have both human interest and immediate dollars-and-cents appeal to the citizens of the area. Newspapers are eager for good story suggestions. Phone the city desk and outline a proposed story. If the editor likes it, he will send a reporter and perhaps a photographer.

ORGANIZATION FACT SHEET

Name:
Allen Technical Center

Address:
750 Daisy Street, Penthum, Wyvex 99999

Telephone:
WAterton 9-9119

Purpose:
Provides youths and adults with basic education, job entry skills, and counseling services.

Started:
July 1, 1969

Number of persons served (update at least monthly):
April, 1970--100 enrolled; 30 placed in jobs; 45 earned eighth-grade equivalency; 20 earned high school equivalency

Duration of funding:
Through June 30, 1970

Financing:
$22,500 for fiscal year ending June 30,1970, of which $10,500 are local and $12,000 are State funds available under the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968, the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, and the Adult Education Act of 1966.

Sponsors:
U.S. Office of Education
Wyvex Education Agency
Penthum School District

Director:
James H. Day--office telephone WAterton 9-9119; home WAterton 9-9121

Secretary:
Miss Cindy Snyder--office telephone WAterton 9-9120; home WAterton 9-9122

Remarks (keep brief):
See clipping attached, Penthum Daily News, April 3, 1970--30 placed in jobs; 45 earned eighth-grade equivalency; 20 earned high school equivalency.

Newspaper Tips

Try to be available when the reporter comes.

Give advance notice of school events or projects.

Help the reporter get background information by digging up the facts for him.

Don't demand promises from the reporter that the story will appear on a certain day--the decision is not up to him.

Don't complain if the story is cut--the cutting is done by the city and make-up editors.

Don't rotate your stories among different newspapers. Also if a reporter comes to you for information about a story he thought up, don't tell it to the other papers.

Don't evade or side-step a reporter's questions. If you don't know an answer to a question, refer the reporter to someone who does.

Don't forget to say thank you. Let members of the press know their efforts are appreciated. And if someone does a particularly good job of reporting about the project, a short, simple thank-you note will be appreciated. When thanking a reporter, write to his editor, with a copy to him.

Mechanics of Preparing Releases to Newspapers

Put your name, school or project, phone number, other identifying information, and date at the top of the paper.

Do not write a headline, but the subject of the press release may be placed at the top of the story.

Indicate, by means of a release date, when the story can be published. Write: "For release on . . . (day) . . . (date) . . . am or pm papers" just above the first line of the story. If a specific release date is not necessary, write "for immediate release" and be sure you have typed the date on which it was sent.

Keep in mind the release date so that the use of "today" and "yesterday" makes sense in the story.

Leave about one-third of the first page blank at the top for editor's use.

If more than one page, end each page at the end of a paragraph and write "more" at the bottom. At the end type "end" or ###.

Use nontechnical, noneducational language. Avoid jargon, especially research, psychological, or sociological terminology.

Use short sentences, not more than 19 words on the average; short words, an average of not more than 150 syllables per 100 words; and short paragraphs.

Avoid abbreviations, slang, adjectives, and wordiness.

Allow plenty of time for the release to reach the papers. Delivery by hand is the best guarantee.

Send your news releases to all the papers in town and to all radio and television stations which have news programs.

What Is News?

A word of warning in defining news: Think in terms of what is newsworthy, not self-serving "publicity."

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of news--spot news and feature stories. Spot news is perishable. It must be used before a certain event takes place or immediately afterward to have any value. A feature story can be used almost anytime. It highlights the human element behind the news.

Here are a few good sources for news stories:

The annual report. Don't just present it to the board of directors. Write a short news story summarizing its major points, then send the story and a complete copy of the report to the news media.

The people in the organization.

Events. Include anniversaries, special observances, or activities.

Visits by prominent local, State, or Federal officials.

Statistical information which shows improvement in any phase of the program.

Human interest material which shows how the project is touching the lives of people and helping them.

For a spot news story, write a complete story the way a reporter would write it. The lead (the first sentence or two) should usually answer the questions "who, what, where, why, and when" (use exact dates--May 12, not just Tuesday). The lead is designed to give the reader information quickly and in such a manner that he will want to read the rest of the story.

After the lead, the details are written, in declining order of importance. This permits the story to be cut from the bottom, if need be, without having to rewrite it to avoid leaving out important facts.

Practice a little before submitting copy to a newspaper. In the meantime, keep your news going out by means of simple news sheets such as the one displayed on page 5.

One valuable hint when writing spot or feature stories: Never editorialize. Don't write, "All the trainees have been helped by the program." Not only is it hackneyed and trite, but it is, after all, just an opinion. Instead, write something like this: "Ed Jones, 38, who lives in Penthum, said this was the first promotion he has had since starting work at the plant 5 years ago. 'I know that my training is responsible for that promotion,' he said."

Other Publications

Important as they are, big newspapers are not the only printed-word outlet for news. Get a list of all local publications, including suburban newspapers, weeklies, trade papers; employee magazines or house organs; union, fraternal, chamber of commerce, business, and church publications; and shopping news sheets given away by many chain stores. Frequently editors of these publications are only too glad to give the project a brief mention. Find out what these editors will use and their deadlines. The same is true, of course, of small, local radio stations. Make contacts there, too.

Use of Radio and Television

Potential students for vocational, adult, and manpower education programs rely on television and radio for information. They may not enroll in classes because they do not know about specific course offerings, or about the more general advantages of education and training: reading competency, social competency, job opportunities, and promotions. Radio spot announcements are particularly effective. The airwaves should be saturated with such announcements if possible; one will make only a dent in the potential clientele.

For programs other than spot announcements, it is best to supply radio and television public affairs directors with information about the particular vocational and/or adult education programs, including information about experts in those areas. The stations usually do their own script writing and will request technical assistance when needed.

Program representatives appearing on television or radio should relax and speak conversationally. Before appearances, they should know the topics that will be covered and be prepared to discuss them. In other words, the specialist should do his "homework" thoroughly and be ready to discuss his area of expertise. The representative should avoid answering questions outside his field, especially if the questions are political in nature. The person selected to represent the program must be capable of making a good impression.

Radio and television stations are required by the terms of their Federal licenses to make available a part of the time they are on the air for "public service" programs and announcements.

Certainly, there will be some information about your program from time to time which is in the public service category. Bearing in mind that broadcast stations are commercial operations, with many people competing for time, try to make the public service announcement as newsworthy as possible.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

In addition to public relations--telling the public your story--community relations will help to present your program in a favorable light.

Community relations in vocational and adult basic education often begin in the classroom. This especially applies to adult basic education since its students are illiterate or semi-literate. They rely on family, friends, and neighbors for their information. Thus, satisfied students are of prime importance because their good reports will be passed on

NEWS SHEET

Allen Technical Center
750 Daisy Street
Penthum, Wyvex 99999

April 5, 1970
J. Day: WA 9-9119
Home: WA 9-9121

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

WHAT: Allen Technical Center Open House

WHEN: April 10, 1970 at 8 p.m.

WHERE: Allen Technical Center, 750 Daisy Street

WHO: Mayor Peter Winford, principal speaker. Other speakers--
Henry Hamilton, President of the Chamber of Commerce; and
Benjamin Renn, U.S. Employment Service representative

ADDITIONAL FACTS:

The public is invited to the celebration.

As of April 1, the Center has trained 30 persons for employment in the automotive, steel, and aviation industries. More than half of these earned a high school equivalency while in training, and all reached at least eighth-grade proficiency before completion of training.

The Center receives its funds from the Wyvex Education Agency and the Penthum School District.

to families, friends and neighbors. So will their poor reports.

Former students are the most ignored audience. Too often students gain a skill, attain eighth-grade proficiency, or earn their high school equivalency and then are forgotten by administrators and teachers. There are ways to remedy this. For example:

> In a St. Louis school, when students are ready to graduate or leave, they fill out forms giving their current address and employment status and receive two more with which to keep the school office informed of changes in their address, type or place of employment. The students are informed that during the first 2 years following graduation, they will receive questionnaires requesting their cooperation in giving the school information on their postschool progress and problems. The school acknowledges receipt of the form. Interviews are arranged when deemed advisable. In addition, personal visits to the graduate's employer are made by the school coordinator.

Another way to advance the community relations effort is to enlist the cooperation of other administrators and teachers. An education administrator can help by involving public officials in planning for long-range objectives and by asking their help in the program's curriculum. People included in the planning stage are far more understanding of the final decision made.

An administrator can offer to make school facilities available for meetings of worthy organizations. Then organization members can see the evening adult, vocational, or manpower classes in operation as they attend their own meetings.

In addition, an administrator can participate in the community and show through affiliation that education personnel are interested in and believe in the community as a whole. He could, for example:

Join the chamber of commerce and be on its speakers' bureau.
Serve as a member of the board of directors of the Salvation Army.
Act as an adviser to the draft board.
Work with the Community Chest.
Serve as a member of the county council of social agencies.
Offer the services of the school to all commissions and boards.
Join a service club.

Community activity is the responsibility of teachers, too. It is a good idea for directors to arrange to give teachers time to attend meetings and participate in community affairs such as the Boy Scouts, Community Chest, and the Red Cross.

There are other aspects of community relations which you should keep in mind. Remember that the products of vocational training are employable graduates, and that the products of manpower courses and adult basic education are literate citizens and educationally upgraded employees. As part of your community relations effort, try to win the approval, confidence, and assistance of those groups which are immediately concerned with these employable graduates and upgraded employees--management, employers, and personnel officers.

Other publics include government agencies and State and local employment services. They also include local firms, which might sponsor an essay or project contest or present awards to outstanding students. Awards and prizes are good public relations for both the school and the donor.

Other possibilities:

Invite mothers with foreign backgrounds to the homemaking class to demonstrate the preparation of foods of their native lands.

Ask foremen, supervisors, plant managers, and union officials to talk to job preparation classes.

Request clergy to speak to family life classes.

Request the personnel manager of a large firm to explain the duties of many different kinds of office workers.

Invite an industrialist and/or labor leader who has backed the program to be the main speaker at dedication ceremonies.

It is a good idea to spend time planning classroom presentations with local experts so students will get the most instructional benefit from their visits.

If you have a relevant advisory committee, work with it. If you don't, perhaps you can form one. Advisory committees can be most effective in your community relations campaign. They not only can offer advice about the types of education services needed in the community, but they can also help to provide desirable relationships with the public. It is a good idea to have representation from all possible community groups who are interested in vocational and adult education.

Here are examples of what advisory committees can do:

Determine content, length of course, and lesson materials.

Select sites for new schools and equipment.

Set qualifications for and select instructors.

Help secure adequate support for both capital outlay and current operational expenses.

Win support for expansion of facilities.

Make substantial contributions to the program by donation of equipment, supplies, library materials, or direct financial aid.

Award scholarships or give cash prizes to worthy students.

Members of advisory committees can be salesmen in the community. Urge them to carry back information and distribute printed material about education programs to the organizations they represent. Encourage them to talk and write about the committee's function in vocational or adult education.

Advisory committee members are helpful in gaining proper recognition and support for education programs through speeches to community groups and by appearing before the board of education.

YOUR EFFORT COUNTS

Winning the support of the public for adult, vocational, and manpower programs is vital to their success. That is why your efforts in public and community relations are important. Your effort counts—and counts a great deal.

It is hoped that this booklet will serve you well as a basic guide. If you need any additional help, write the Public Information Office, Bureau of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education, Washington, D.C. 20202.